

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VILNIUS 000252

SIPDIS

FOR SECRETARY RUMSFELD FROM AMBASSADOR MULL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/09/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [LH](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR MINISTER OF DEFENSE GEDIMINAS  
KIRKILAS' VISIT TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen D. Mull; Reason: 1.4 (b and d)

-----  
Summary  
-----

1. (C) Mr. Secretary, Lithuanian Defense Minister Kirkilas comes to Washington March 14 eager to demonstrate that, despite inexperience in defense policy, he is a capable and committed friend to the U.S. His performance in less than three months on the job has been impressively favorable to our interests: he steadfastly vows that Lithuanian troops will remain in Iraq as long as the U.S. wants; he did yeoman's work in pushing Lithuania to volunteer for NATO's arguably most difficult Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan; and has been a strong supporter of maintaining NATO as the principal forum for transatlantic security issues. In his meetings with you and other administration officials, he will likely:

-- brief you on Lithuania's efforts to amass support from us and other NATO allies for the PRT, and indicate his military's most important needs for it;

-- commit to long-term engagement in Iraq, seek your thoughts on how the Mission is likely to change and how Lithuania can best support it;

-- urge increased U.S. financial support for Lithuania's military operations, such as in the proposed Coalition Solidarity Funds;

-- seek your support for Lithuania's efforts to democratize Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus and other states in the region through military contacts;

-- ask your views on NATO's future as the principal forum for transatlantic security dialogue in the wake of German Chancellor Schroeder's recent comments; and

-- express gratitude for U.S. support for Baltic air policing, and renew an offer for U.S. use of Lithuanian facilities.

In addition to praising Lithuania's steadfast support to U.S. interests, I recommend you continue to assure Kirkilas of U.S. support for the Afghan PRT, congratulate Lithuania on its constructive approach to security with Russia and new democracies in the region, and urge Lithuania to play a more visible role in Europe's security discussions. Lithuania's military and diplomatic activism give it a much higher profile than its small size would suggest, and its coincidence of views with ours on political-military issues make it a valuable amplifier for U.S. interests. End Summary.

-----  
An Enemy of the U.S. is an Enemy of Lithuania  
-----

2. (U) Common values, a history of mutual support, and common goals for regional security bind Lithuania and the United States. Lithuania continues to recognize a debt of gratitude to the United States for having maintained a policy of non-recognition of Baltic annexation throughout the years of Soviet occupation. Following the restoration of Lithuania's independence, the United States cemented the friendship, providing political and financial support to Lithuania, welcoming the country into the transatlantic alliance, and supporting Lithuanian membership in NATO and the European Union.

3. (U) Lithuania already is a well-established transatlantic partner whom, although a new member of NATO, has proven to be one of our strongest allies in the transatlantic alliance. Lithuania's accession to the European Union last year gives the U.S. a friend in that forum on the question of the mission and operation of ESDP. The Lithuanian government views NATO as the guarantor of its security, not ESDP, and shares our view that ESDP should work within the Berlin Plus framework, increasing European military capabilities, while avoiding duplication. ESDP should, they believe, eschew an autonomous headquarters and a Europe-only mutual defense policy.

14. (C) Lithuania has approximately 240 soldiers deployed in support of U.S. or NATO-led operations around the world. Lithuania currently has 24 service personnel deployed to Afghanistan in support of ISAF. In Iraq, there are 116 Lithuanian soldiers serving under Danish and Polish command conducting patrols in each sector, assisting in maintaining public order, and involved with rebuilding and reconstruction efforts. The British, Danish and Polish commanders have all commended Lithuanian soldiers' skills and professionalism. The Lithuanian Parliament has committed to support this deployment through the end of 2005. Lithuanian soldiers have also performed admirably as peacekeepers in the Balkans, where 100 soldiers are contributing to the increasing stability of this region. In addition, one Lithuanian soldier serves with the EUFOR Staff in EU Operation Althea (Bosnia) and one officer serves on the OSCE Border Monitoring Mission in Georgia. The Lithuanian Parliament, in late 2003, voted to extend the Iraqi mission through calendar year 2004.

15. (C) Until recently, Lithuania maintained a 40-man Special Operations Squadron in Afghanistan. The country's SOF soldiers have received high marks and praise from the U.S. SOF troops on the ground as well as from the CENTCOM staff. Unfortunately, they are a small force and the GOL was forced to bring them home to prepare for their upcoming inclusion in NATO's NRF-5 and NRF-6 rotations. The Ministry of Defense has committed to return the SOF contribution to CENTCOM's AOR in 2006, upon completion of those commitments. More recently, the GOL agreed to lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team in the western province of Ghawr (see para 7).

-----  
Something To Prove  
-----

16. (C) Kirkilas, a post-communist Social Democrat with close links to Prime Minister Brazauskas, replaced defense technocrat Linas Linkevicius as Defense Minister when the new government took power in December. Eager to overcome popular perceptions of inexperience in defense matters, he plunged into high-level activism that has only improved our already strong defense relationship. As other European allies waver on how long they will stay in Iraq, Kirkilas has repeatedly told the parliament and public that Lithuania has an important obligation to remain in Iraq as long as the U.S. requests its support, and he has been a vocal advocate of NATO's Iraq training mission. He overcame heavy skepticism in prodding the government and parliament to volunteer the Afghan PRT. He has strongly encouraged internal reform to make Lithuania's military a better fit to NATO requirements, and energized Lithuania's deployment to the NATO Reaction Force. Kirkilas has also been a missionary of democracy, urging stronger and more active military links to democratizing forces from Belarus to central Asia. On Russia, he has scrupulously avoided the common Baltic temptation to grandstand against Russian aims in the region, instead focusing on building a transparent and constructive security relationship with Lithuania's giant neighbor.

-----  
Agenda for Washington  
-----

17. (C) Kirkilas will likely seek the following in his meeting with you and other Administration officials during his Washington visit:

-- Afghanistan PRT: The Ministry's primary focus at this time is standing up the Lithuanian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. Lithuania agreed to establish and lead a PRT in the Western province of Ghawr, based in the town of Chaghcharan. At the same time, the GOL made it clear that it would require significant assistance from NATO allies to accomplish the mission (refs A and B). While Kirkilas and his team are pursuing support requests through SHAPE (with the generous help and attention of General Jones), they are eager for clear expressions of senior U.S. support for their efforts.

-- Iraq: Kirkilas will repeat Lithuania's commitment to remain shoulder to shoulder with us in Iraq, but will also be eager for your vision of the Mission's direction in the year ahead. He is in the process of preparing new appeals to the Parliament to authorize troop deployments and will want your advice on what Lithuania could best contribute within its limited resources.

-- Military Assistance: Lithuanians are keen to obtain as large a share as possible of the proposed Coalition Solidarity Funds now under consideration in the Congress to help finance their activities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

-- Democracy Support: Kirkilas, like Lithuania in general,

is eager to work in support of democracy in the former Soviet states. He will be eager to hear your thoughts on how best Lithuania can support military transformation and strengthening of transatlantic ties in Ukraine and Georgia. He will brief you on Lithuania's intention to host a NATO-Ukraine Defense Ministerial consultation in Vilnius on October 28. He may also brief you on Lithuania's interest in pursuing mid-level contacts with Belarusian military officers to empower them as agents of democratic change.

-- NATO Air Policing: For political more than practical reasons, the NATO Air Policing mission in the Baltics is extremely important to the Ministry of Defense and Lithuanian society as a whole. While supporting U.S.- and NATO-led military operations with troop deployments to regions of little importance to the average Lithuanian, the GOL can point to the Air Policing operations as the only tangible proof that membership in NATO has benefits as well as costs and that the alliance is prepared to fulfill its obligations to secure its member states. Ministry officials can be expected to voice their support of and gratitude for continued air policing in the Baltics. They are aware, however, of the U.S. position that this is an interim measure and that NATO must decide what the long-term solution to airspace security in the Baltics will be.

-- Future of NATO: Recent suggestions by Schroeder and others that NATO may be losing its relevance as the principal transatlantic security forum have rattled Lithuanian policymakers. Kirkilas will be eager to hear U.S. views on the question.

-- Lithuanian facilities: During his visit to Washington last year, then-Minister Linkevicius offered Zokniai Airbase in Siauliai (site of the current NATO air policing mission) for any appropriate U.S. needs, such as a role in the ballistic missile defense system. The Lithuanian government understands that BMDO will visit Poland to discuss basing possibilities, and remain interested in U.S. reaction to its earlier proposal, which remains unanswered from the U.S. side.

-----  
Strengthening Our Alliance  
-----

18. (C) Lithuania is a small country, but its extraordinary diplomatic and military activism in recent years and strong affinity for the U.S. make it a valuable advocate of our interests in European security questions. I encourage you to pay warm tribute to Kirkilas's leadership on Iraq, Afghanistan and other issues of importance to us, while encouraging him and his colleagues in government to adopt a higher profile in European discussions of these issues. I also encourage you to offer all appropriate support and encouragement for Lithuania's brave volunteer effort in Afghanistan, and for its continuing outreach to Russia and other former Soviet states. Investing support and encouragement in this friendliest of allies will continue to pay rich dividends for our interests from Brussels to Kabul.  
Mull